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NSC FOR NEA STAFF

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CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
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COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#)1. Mideast

[1](#)2. US-Israel Relations

Key stories in the media:

Over the weekend all media reported that the Quartet decided on Friday to maintain the boycott of the Hamas government until it

renounces terrorism and recognizes Israel and the previous agreements that it signed with the Palestinian Authority. The media reported that on Saturday the Palestinian government condemned the decision. However, Yediot wrote on Sunday that people in Gaza and in Ramallah noted with satisfaction the position of Russia and Germany, which deviated from the joint decision and called for an end to the economic and diplomatic boycott of the Palestinians. Yediot reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who "will arrive this weekend for a summit with Olmert and Abu Mazen," called for the resumption of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians despite the violent incidents in the Gaza Strip. According to Yediot, the administration has already begun to coordinate the summit.

Ha'aretz (on Sunday) and Maariv (today) reported that the IDF is gearing up for a possible invasion of the Gaza Strip. Maariv wrote that the IDF fears a Sabra and Shatila-like massacre. Maariv reported that the Israeli defense establishment is preparing for three possible scenarios: a mass killing, thousands of refugees thronging the Gaza-Israel fence, and a desperate call for help from Fatah.

Ha'aretz reported that on Sunday PM Ehud Olmert rejected Defense Minister Amir Peretz's proposal to evacuate several illegal West Bank outposts. In a routine work meeting between the two, Peretz suggested three or four possible outposts. Olmert replied that the timing is not right for an evacuation. Ha'aretz quoted sources in the Prime Minister's Office as saying that Peretz proposed tiny outposts with just a few trailers. The sources were quoted as saying that the PM is in favor of removing illegal outposts, but supports developing a comprehensive plan on the matter. Ha'aretz said that Olmert told Peretz they would determine the proper timing together.

On Sunday various media (banner in Yediot) quoted President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt as saying during a press conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday that without the release of abducted IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, it will not be possible to advance the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. He expressed hope that an agreement will be reached soon. The Palestinians are also interested in the release of prisoners, Mubarak was quoted as saying, and added that Cairo is mediating on this matter.

Over the weekend all media Egyptian authorities announced on Saturday that they had arrested a 31 year-old Egyptian subject whom they accused of spying for Israel. Today Ha'aretz reported that the student arrested in Egypt confessed to spying for Israel. The Egyptians announced, moreover, that arrest warrants had been issued in absentia against three Israelis who allegedly had recruited the young Egyptian man, Mohammed Issam Ghanem el-Atar. Israeli officials denied any knowledge of the affair. On Sunday Maariv's Jacky Hoogie suggested that the highly publicized arrest was a political ploy by the Egyptian government that was geared to appease domestic public opinion in the aftermath of a massive crackdown on Muslim Brotherhood activists, which was highly unpopular. Today Maariv reported that two Syrians photographed the Israeli Embassy in Cairo.

Israel Radio reported on the abduction attempt of an Israeli at the Eli junction in the West Bank on Sunday. Three Hamas terrorists were arrested in connection with the episode.

Ha'aretz reported that Qadura Fares, a leading Fatah figure, who has recently been involved in mediation efforts between PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas and Khaled Mashal, the head of Hamas's political bureau, told the newspaper on Sunday that during their meeting in Mecca on Tuesday, Abbas and Mashal, are expected to agree on setting up a national unity government in the territories. Fares was quoted as saying that there are no longer any disputes between the two main Palestinian groups. Ha'aretz quoted Mashal as saying on Sunday that "we must not fail on Tuesday in Saudi Arabia. The dialogue with Fatah must succeed." Ha'aretz wrote that according to details of the agreement reached between the two sides, the current Prime Minister, Ismail Haniyeh, will also be the head of the unity government.

Major media reported that on Sunday Khaled Mashal condemned

excavations by Israeli archaeologists near Jerusalem's al-Aqsa Mosque and warned they were "playing with fire." He was quoted as saying at a news conference in Damascus: "I have a stern warning for the enemy." "Sharon's desecration of Al-Aqsa sparked the 2000 uprising. The Israeli leadership must learn from this lesson. We have confidence in our people, its masses, all of its groups and military wings," he added.

The Jerusalem Post reported that senior US and European officials have told the newspaper that, while Israel complains that arms are being smuggled to Hizbullah across the Syrian-Lebanese border, it is not providing the international community with the documentation to prove it. On Sunday Ha'aretz quoted Hizbullah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah as saying in an interview with the Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Rai Al-Aam that he is willing to receive aid not only from Iran but also from Muslim countries that have diplomatic ties with Israel, such as Egypt, and states that are considered moderate, such as Saudi Arabia. He was quoted as saying that it is no secret that Iran is aiding Hizbullah by sending money and weapons via Syria.

Yediot cited British newspaper Sunday Times reports that Mossad agents killed a high-ranking Iranian nuclear scientist. Yediot wrote that American intelligence officials reportedly told the British weekly that the nuclear scientist, Ardeshire Hassanpour, worked in the uranium-conversion compound in Isfahan.

All media reported that on Sunday the cabinet approved the appointment of Defense Ministry Director-General Maj. Gen. (res.) Gabi Ashkenazi to the post of IDF Chief of Staff, and that it decided that his term will be for four years, rather than three years as has-been the case until now.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter left today for a four-day working visit to the United States and Canada that will include what he described as a "breakthrough signing of an agreement [with the US] for the war on terror and establishing cooperation between the Internal Security Ministry and the Department of Homeland Security."

The Jerusalem Post printed a Jewish Telegraphic Agency story that, speaking at a dinner for AIPAC's Northeast Region over the weekend, presidential hopeful Sen. Hillary Rodman Clinton "tried to convince doubters that she will stand by Israel."

The Jerusalem Post quoted Jewish Agency Spokesman Yarden Vatikay as saying that leading US news media have refused to sell Internet ad space to the Jewish Agency for a campaign against Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The newspaper reported that CNN called the ad "political."

Israel Radio reported that British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett will arrive in Israel today on her first visit to the country.

Ha'aretz reported that in mid-January the Office of Coordinator of the GOI's Activities in the Territories presented foreign diplomats with a document detailing easing measures for the Palestinians: The document is based on a bolstering of Abbas. Among other steps, it proposes that employees of the Palestinian judicial system be granted freedom of movement. Ha'aretz (Amira Hass) said that the document did not live up to expectations springing from the latest Olmert-Abbas meeting.

Ha'aretz quoted Israeli nuclear experts as saying that, akin to Israel, Iran is striving is striving for a nuclear ambiguity policy.

Maariv reported that a Chicago court acquitted Muhammad Salah, a Palestinian who resides in the US, who was suspected of involvement of terrorism, despite the testimony of two Shin Bet interrogators who were especially flown in from Israel.

Hatzofe reported that an Israeli-made stable with a camel-milking facility has been inaugurated in Dubai. Yediot reported that two Muslim nations in Africa are interested in opening branches of Yad Sarah -- a charitable Israeli organization that lends medical equipment to patients and disabled persons.

On Sunday The Jerusalem Post reported that an Israeli-developed security system -- Behavior Pattern Recognition -- was used at the Super Bowl game in Miami.

All media reported that Interior Minister Roni Bar-On (Kadima) has withdrawn his candidacy for the post of justice minister. Ha'aretz reported that former cabinet minister Prof. Amnon Rubinstein and former Kadima MK Prof. Uriel Reichman, who are not currently part of Israel's political system, are candidates for the position.

All media reported on the resignation of lawyer and former justice minister David Libai from the defense of Israeli President Moshe Katsav. Celebrated attorney Avigdor Feldman has taken Libai's place in Katsav's defense team.

I1. Mideast:

Summary:

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "The government should immediately and vigorously state that the country adopts the Arab League summit initiative, and that it is willing to negotiate over its basic points with any authorized Palestinian party."

Chief Economic Editor Sever Plotker wrote in the editorial of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The dream of a 'national unity government' in which terrorists will serve alongside civilians, fanatics alongside technocrats, is not expected to come true. For even if a government of this type is formed in Ramallah or Beirut, it will soon dissolve, leaving behind scorched earth."

Block Quotes:

II. " Hamas Is Not Going Away "

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (2/5): "The terrible disturbances unfolding in the Gaza Strip, the killings of members of the security organizations of both Fatah and Hamas, the lack of control of the twin leaders -- Mahmoud Abbas on one hand and Ismail Haniyeh on the other -- are too easily being called 'civil war.' This is a term that apparently offers Israel refuge from the need to act on the diplomatic front. However, Israel has never needed excuses.... During the past year, a new political reality emerged, both in the territories and in Israel, which the Quartet refuses to acknowledge. Hamas, not Fatah won the elections, and Hamas is the one that has a hold on the Palestinian institutions of government, while Fatah is behaving as a rebel movement that refuses to accept its defeats.... Instead of constantly trying to decide which Israeli manipulation will work best, the government should immediately and vigorously state that the country adopts the Arab League summit initiative, and that it is willing to negotiate over its basic points with any authorized Palestinian party. At the same time, it should state that it would be willing to cooperate with any Palestinian government on issues that are related to essential services and concern the rehabilitation of civilian infrastructures. To this end there is no need for Hamas to recognize Israel, or vice versa - only to appreciate the humanitarian needs of a population that has been transformed into a hostage."

II. "War of Civilizations"

Chief Economic Editor Sever Plotker wrote in the editorial of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (2/5): "The fronts are many -- the war is one. In Gaza, in Beirut, in Baghdad and to an increasing degree in Tehran too, the great war over the soul and image of the Muslim Middle East is taking place.... From this standpoint, Islamic fanaticism is adopting the patterns of control of the extremist Western ideologies of the 20th century. Like them, Muslim fanaticism needs the eternal fire of armed revolution, holy war of one kind or another and the aspiration for physical and ideological conquests.... Stability is, therefore, the number one enemy of fanatic Islam, as it was the enemy of fascism. Thus, there is no possibility of peaceful coexistence between fanatics and

moderates. The dream of a 'national unity government' in which terrorists will serve alongside civilians, fanatics alongside technocrats, is not expected to come true. For even if a government of this type is formed in Ramallah or Beirut, it will soon dissolve, leaving behind scorched earth. You cannot ride on the back of a ferocious tiger, unless you are willing to become its next victim. Israel stands outside the internal Arab and internal Muslim war of civilization. But only ostensibly: Conciliation with Israel is one of the main disputed issues -- though not the main bone of contention. At the heart of the dispute stands the question of the future: What kind of future can hundreds of millions of children in the greater Muslim east look forward to: A future of jihad or of growth? Of darkness or of light? This dilemma is one that the Arab nation will have to resolve on its own, and there will be no shortcuts in it."

12. US-Israel Relations:

Summary:

Editorial writer Eliahu Salpeter wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "In its political struggle, Israel needs the support of American Jews. In their struggle against anti-Semitism, they need wiser Israeli behavior in the conflict with the Palestinians."

Zalman Shoval, senior Likud member and former ambassador to the US, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Both sides, Israel and the US, must undertake without delay the task of investing renewed and relevant content in the term 'strategic cooperation.'"

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in Ha'aretz: "The Jews of Israel comprise perhaps the most sympathetic group toward Bush in the entire world.... On the other hand, American Jews constitute one of the least sympathetic groups."

Block Quotes:

1I. "Who Really Cares About This Carter Guy?"

Editorial writer Eliahu Salpeter wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (2/5): "More infuriating and painful [than the heated controversy in the US media] is the fact that [Jimmy Carter's latest] book creates a sort of triangle: the denunciations and defamations of Arab and pro-Arab sources have recently been joined by powerful Jews protesting against the occupation and Israel's behavior in the territories, speaking in the name of Jewish values. And now they are joined by the former US President, a symbol of liberalism, righteousness and American support for the weak and persecuted all over the world. His words are a kind of seal of approval for the denunciations of Israel by the 'Do-Gooders' Israelis once considered themselves part of.... Criticism of the Israeli occupation and anti-Semitism are both on the rise. The former spurs anti-Semitism, and the latter reinforces hostility toward Israel. In its political struggle, Israel needs the support of American Jews. In their struggle against anti-Semitism, they need wiser Israeli behavior in the conflict with the Palestinians. American Jews need to remember this reciprocal relation no less than the leaders of Israel."

II. "Aircraft Carrier in the Middle East"

Zalman Shoval, senior Likud member and former ambassador to the US, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (2/5): "Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Washington has paid less and less attention to strategic cooperation with Israel.... All this may change now, in a reality of escalating confrontation between the free world under the leadership of the United States (even if the US has weakened due to the Iraqi entanglement, there is no substitute on the horizon to its leadership) and Islamic fundamentalism with its two heads -- Shi'ite Iran on one hand and Sunni al-Qaida on the other -- and such elements as Hizbullah, Hamas and the Shi'ite militias in Iraq, which have attached themselves to these two."

There is no doubt that Israel's poor performance in the second Lebanon War was a source of severe disappointment to the US administration, both on the political level and in the military realm. But the IDF and Israel's security forces are still considered among the best in the world, so that their stock has only dropped temporarily on the Washington stock market. On condition, of course, that Israel takes effective and credible steps to improve its security and civilian leadership. This new reality can clearly be observed with regard to Iran. Regarding Iran, a situation is emerging where Israel, whether it likes it or not, could under certain circumstances play an active role, not just the part of an observer from the sidelines.... But Iran is only part of the problem, since in the overall battle against Islamic fundamentalism the free world does not have many dependable allies in our region. The regimes, though not necessarily the populations, in the 'moderate' Sunni states (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and the oil emirates) do share the American concerns, but at least one of these states, Saudi Arabia, is also a source of inspiration and funding for Sunni jihadism, and there are many question marks regarding the others as well.... Whether we truly turn into America's 'aircraft carrier in the Middle East' in the future, or whether we are only one of the foundations upon which it depends in what has already been defined as 'World War III' -- both sides, Israel and the US, must undertake without delay the task of investing renewed and relevant content in the term 'strategic cooperation.'"

III. "Abashed by Bush"

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in Ha'aretz (2/4): "This is one of those bizarre anomalies that characterize the period: The Jews of Israel comprise perhaps the most sympathetic group toward Bush in the entire world. They are certainly more supportive than the general American public and may very well be more sympathetic than any particular group of Americans. On the other hand, American Jews constitute one of the least sympathetic groups. A vast majority of them oppose Bush. Indeed, many really loathe him.... Some American Jews have a hard time digesting a reality in which an Israeli prime minister can stand at Bush's side and describe the war in Iraq as an achievement. In fact, it could be said that the Israelis' fondness for Bush actually serves to alienate these American Jews from Israel. It is a sort of purist self-indulgence that does not tolerate contradictions: Jews from Israel. If this is the type of leader Israelis respect, and this is the type of leader who is a fan of Israel, how, these Jews wonder, can they identify with Israel?.... Bush is also the first president for whose support Israel is paying a price, even if it is a hidden price, among other important supporters, the Jews of America. He is making it difficult for a certain Jewish public to understand Israel and is making it easier for them to distance themselves from Israel. Of course, it's not he who is the guilty party. In this test, it is only the Jews who are failing."

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